

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
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COME-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 /085 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6825
INFO AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0708

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP PGOV PINT PINS EFIN ELAB MP SE UR
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - JULY 1

REF: PORT LOUIS 680

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 0707 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE. END
SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING A CABINET MEETING ON JUNE 24 IT WAS ANNOUNCED
THAT MAURITIUS HAD EXTENDED RECOGNITION TO THE NEW RENE GOVERN-
MENT IN THE SEYCHELLES. HOWEVER, THE MESSAGE SENT TO RENE BY
PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM MADE CLEAR THAT THE LATTER'S UNHAPPINESS
WITH THE COUP THAT BROUGHT RENE TO POWER, IN AN UNUSUAL (AND
REFRESHING) DEPARTURE IN RECOGNITION STATEMENTS. RAM'S MESSAGE
TO RENE WAS AS FOLLOWS: "I HAVE THE HONOR TO REFER TO YOUR
MESSAGE OF THE 11TH JUNE AND TO INFORM YOU THAT THE GOVERNMENT
OF MAURITIUS HAS BEEN PLEASED TO EXTEND ITS RECOGNITION TO THE
NEW GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES, WITHOUT HOWEVER
APPROVING THE SETTING ASIDE BY FORCE OF A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT
ELECTED BY THE BALLOT BOX. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORK TOGETHER
WITH YOU FOR PEACE AND HARMONY IN WORLD AFFAIRS,
PARTICULARLY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH
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THE PRESIDENCY HAS BEEN CONFERRED UPON YOU WILL NOT MAKE YOUR
TASK EASY AND WE HOPE AND PRAY THAT MODERATION AND SOCIAL
JUSTICE WILL CONTINUE TO PREVAIL IN THE REPUBLIC OF
SEYCHELLES." (COMMENT: THE LECTURING TONE WILL NOT PLEASE
RENE, BUT IT EXPRESSES EXACTLY RAMGOOLAM'S ATTITUDE TOWARD
THE RENE COUP, WHICH DISPLEASED HIM BECAUSE: (A) HE DOES
NOT LIKE UNDEMOCRATIC MEANS; (B) HE WAS CLOSE TO MANCHAM AND DOES

NOT LIKE RENE'S IDEOLOGICAL BENT; AND (C) HE FEARS THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) MAY WANT TO COPY THE SEYCHELLES PEOPLE'S UNITED PARTY (SPUP) BY TAKING OVER THIS COUNTRY BY FORCE.)

2. ON JUNE 27 PRIME MINISTRE RAMGOOLAM HELD HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE JANUARY. THE PRESS REPORTED HE WAS IN GOOD HUMOR AND GOOD FORM, AND HANDLED THE QUESTIONS WITH HIS USUAL SKILL, EVEN WHEN HE WAS BEING EVASIVE. INDEPENDENT L'EXPRESS SUMMED UP THE SESSION WITH THIS HEADLINE: "RAMGOOLAM LITERALLY OBSESSED BY THE COUP D'ETAT IN THE SEYCHELLES." IT IS TRUE THAT HE MADE REPEATED REFERENCES TO THE SEYCHELLES COUP, WHICH HE DEPLORED, EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT MAURITIUS IS THE ONLY REMAINING DEMOCRACY IN ITS REGION (SEVERAL LARGE COUNTRIES APART), AND EVIDENCED HIS DETERMINATION TO PRESERVE PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN HIS COUNTRY. HE CALLED ON THE PRESS TO COOPERATE IN MAINTAINING STABILITY, ORDER, DISCIPLINE AND HARMONY IN MAURITIUS. HE LABELLED THE RENE REGIME A DICTATORSHIP AND SAID HE COULD NOT RECOGNIZE A COUP D'ETAT. ACCORDING TO RAM A COUNTRY NEEDS MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES, BUT THEY ARE NOT CAPABLE OF RULING A COUNTRY. MAURITIUS REMAINS A FREE COUNTRY WHERE PEOPLE CAN DO AS THEY LIKE, UNEMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN REDUCED, INFLATION IS LESS THAN IN OTHER COUNTRIES, AND WHILE THERE IS STILL MUCH TO DO, CHANGES MUST TAKE PLACE SLOWLY. SUGAR PRODUCTION NEEDS TO BE RAISED TO ONE TON PER PERSON OF THE POPULATION (900,000). RAM WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO PRAISE THE

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POLICE, BUT REPEATED THAT THEY CAN'T RUN A COUNTRY. HE NOTED THAT DEMOCRACY IS FRAGILE. MENTIONING SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED FOR SOLUTIONS TO BE FOUND THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS, WITHOUT BLOODSHED.

3. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS, RAM DEPLORED BERENGER'S STATEMENT THAT THE MMM WOULD BE IN POWER BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. HE SAID HE WOULD WELCOME THE SUPPORT OF THE MMM FOR HIS GOVERNMENT, BUT HE IS OPPOSED TO CREATION OF A SINGLE PARTY, WHICH IS THE EQUIVALENT OF A DICTATORSHIP. HE PRAISED GAETAN DUVAL AS A PATRIOT (DESPITE HIS WELL-KNOWN FAULTS) WHO WORKS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY. HE SAW LITTLE TO BE GAINED BY TRADING THE PRESENT SYSTEM FOR A REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT, BUT SAID THAT WOULD BE FOR THE MAURITIAN PEOPLE TO DECIDE. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, HE SAID HE HAS BEGUN TO HAVE DOUBTS AND FEARS ABOUT A REPUBLICAN SYSTEM (BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SEYCHELLES). HE SAID HE WOULD NOT LIKE TO BE AWAKENED ONE MORNING WITH A GUN POINTED AT HIS HEAD.

4. MMM PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH MADE A PUBLIC STATEMENT PUBLISHED BY LE MILITANT OF JUNE 28 TO THE EFFECT THAT THE FEARS OF A

POSSIBLE MMM COUP ARE TOTALLY UNFOUNDED FOR THE PARTY HAS CHOSEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL PATH TOWARD SEEKING POWER. HE SAID HIS STATEMENT WAS NECESSARY TO REASSURE THE POPULATION IN THE FACE OF MANY RUMORS RESULTING FROM THE SEYCHELLES EVENTS. HE ALSO SAID WHILE THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN THE PARTY, THOSE WHO SAY IT IS ABOUT TO BREAK UP ARE INDULGING IN WISHFUL THINKING.

5. THIS WAS AFTER THE ANTI-MMM PRESS HAD GIVEN A GOOD DEAL OF PUBLICITY TO AN INTERVIEW WITH JUGNAUTH PUBLISHED BY THE WEEKLY WEEK-END, IN WHICH JUGNAUTH PLACED SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND BERENGER ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES. WHEREAS BERENGER HAS GONE OUT OF HIS WAY TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF WITH THE RENE REGIME, JUGNAUTH SAID THAT THE MMM IN ITS ENTIRETY HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT WELCOMED THE COUP IN THE SEYCHELLES AND THAT HE PERSONALLY IS AGAINST ANY COUP D'ETAT. HE SAID MAURITIUS HAS DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS AND THE PEOPLE RESPECT LEGALITY AND JUSTICE. "A COUP IN MAURITIUS IS UNIMAGINABLE," JUGNAUTH SAID, ADDING THAT HE WOULD NOT FOLLOW ANYONE ALONG THAT PATH.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0708

6. JUGNAUTH ALSO SAID THAT BERENGER WAS EXPRESSING A PERSONAL OPINION WHEN HE SAID THE MMM WOULD TAKE POWER THIS YEAR. THIS WAS NOT THE POSITION OF THE MMM, WHICH HAD BEEN CHOSEN AS THE

OPPOSITION BY THE PEOPLE AND WHICH WOULD REMAIN IN OPPOSITION FOR THE FIVE YEARS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY TERM, AFTER WHICH IT WOULD ASK THE PEOPLE TO ELECT IT TO POWER. JUGNAUTH DISAGREED WITH BERENGER'S PREDICTION THAT ELECTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE HELD BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. THE MMM PRESIDENT REPEATED HIS FRIENDLY WORDS ABOUT RAMGOOLAM'S PERFORMANCE IN LONDON AND HIS PLEASURE IN HAVING BEEN A MEMBER OF THE MAURITIAN DELEGATION TO THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE. JUGNAUTH DECLARED THAT THE MMM "IS NOT AGAINST THE MONARCHY."

7. PAUL BERENGER RETURNED TO MAURITIUS JUNE 28 FOLLOWING A TRIP TO EUROPE, THE SEYCHELLES. THE COMOROS, MADAGASCAR AND EAST AFRICA. ASKED BY THE PRESS ABOUT HIS STATEMENTS MADE IN THE SEYCHELLES (REFTEL), BERENGER SAID MANCHAM HAD CAUSED HIS OWN DOWNFALL BY SIGNALLING HIS INTENTION TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS. THE MMM, HE SAID, IS AGAINST THE USE OF ARMS TO OBTAIN POWER. IN MAURITIUS ELECTIONS ARE HELD, AND IT IS BY THAT MEANS ONLY THAT THE MMM COUNTS ON TAKING POWER, THE SECRETARY GENERAL STATED. HE REPEATED HIS PREDICTION THAT ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR, AND EXPLAINED THAT THE PROMISED

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REFERENDUM ON A REPUBLIC COULD LEAD TO GENERAL ELECTIONS. HE PLANS TO UNDERTAKE A CAMPAIGN TO EXPLAIN TO MAURITIANS WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SEYCHELLES. HIS CONTACTS ABROAD BROUGHT HOME TO HIM HOW MUCH OF A "MESS" THE GOM HAS MADE IN ITS FOREIGN POLICIES. BERENGER SAID THAT HE WAS ASHAMED OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICIES, WHICH INSPIRE NO RESPECT ABROAD, NOT EVEN IN THE WEST.

8. IN AN EDITORIAL LE MILITANT RIDICULED GAMGOOLAM'S CLAIM AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE TO BE THE CHAMPION OF DEMOCRACY AND RAKED HIM OVER THE COALS FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS IN THE 1971 PERIOD WHEN A STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS IMPOSED, ELECTIONS WERE POSTPONED, LEFTIST LEADERS JAILED, AND POPULAR AGITATION SEVERELY REPRESSED. THE PAPER CLAIMED RAM ONLY HELD ELECTIONS FINALLY IN 1976 BECAUSE OF PRESSURE FROM THE MMM AND ITS WORKERS.

9. LE MILITANT ALSO REPORTED A "WAVE" OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR, ESPECIALLY IN THE FREE ZONE. THE PAPER SAID THIS IS ALL PART OF THE GENERAL ECONOMIC CRISIS FOR WHICH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIBLE. THE PRIVATE SECTOR MANAGERS CONTINUE TO ATTRIBUTE THE PROBLEM TO CONGESTION IN THE PORT, WHICH THEY BLAME ON THE MMM-CONTROLLED DOCKWORKERS UNION.

10. THE MMM MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS HAVE VOTED TO INTRODUCE CREOLE AS A THIRD OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN THE THREE TOWN COUNCILS THEY CONTROL. THE MMM HAS LONG ADVOCATED THE USE OF CREOLE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHERWISE OFFICIALLY. (IT WAS LATER LEARNED THAT THE MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUST APPROVE THE

MMM DECISION TO ALLOW CREOLE TO BE USED IN THE THREE COUNCILS
IN QUESTION.)

11. GAETAN DUVAL, LEADER OF THE MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTY (PMSD), RETURNED FROM A TRIP ABROAD JUNE 27. HE TOLD THE
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PRESS THAT IF SOMEONE TRIED TO TAKE OVER MAURITIUS WITH A COUP
THERE WOULD BE CIVIL WAR. AS FOR HIMSELF, HE SAID HE HAS
ALWAYS RESPECTED LEGALITY AND ALWAYS WILL.

12. DUVAL SPARKED THE MOST-TALKED-ABOUT SOCIAL NOTE OF THE WEEK
WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE BECAME ENGAGED WHILE IN BOMBAY
TO A YOUNG INDIAN GIRL OF ARISTOCRATIC LINEAGE. THE GIRL,
SABITA, IS THE NIECE OF PRINCESS INDIRA DEVI, AND IS
DESCENDED FROM BOTH THE NIZAM OF HYDERABAD AND THE RAJAH OF
DHANARAJGIR. IN CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, DUVAL'S MOTHER
AND SISTER CONFIRMED THE NEWS, THE MOTHER REMARKING WITH SOME
DISPLEASURE OR APPREHENSION THAT THE GIRL "IS ONLY 18." FOR
SOME YEARS DUVAL'S INSEPARABLE COMPANION HAS BEEN NICOL
FRANCOIS, THE MINISTER FOR RIDRIGUES. DUVAL, WHO IS 46, WAS MARRIED
BRIEFLY MANY YEARS AGO AND HAS A SON BY THAT MARRIAGE.

13. BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE OAU SUMMIT IN LIBREVILLE (AFTER WHICH
HE PLANS TO HAVE A 2-WEEK VACATION IN EUROPE), PRIME MINISTER
RAMGOOLAM SENT A WARM MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS TO BREZHNEV ON
HIS ELEVATION TO THE POST OF PRESIDENT OF THE USSR, RAM
COMPLIMENTED BREZHNEV AS A "STRONG ADVOCATE OF DETENTE BETWEEN
EAST AND WEST AND OF THE LIMITATION OF STRATEGIC ARMAMENTS,"
AND LOOKED FORWARD TO "BETTER PROSPECTS FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN TO
BECOME A ZONE OF PEACE."

14. ON THE ECONOMIC SCENE, FROM APRIL TO MAY THERE WAS A 1.6
PER CENT RISE IN THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX. THE GOVERNMENT'S
NEW FISCAL MEASURES FOR THE COMING FISCAL YEAR WERE BLAMED.
THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION FRONT IS SEEKING A 22 PER CENT INCREASE
IN WAGES EFFECTIVE JULY 1 BECAUSE OF THE RISE IN THE COST OF
LIVING.
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